

February 22, 2005

Dear Blue Ribbon Task Force,

Friends of the Sea Otter (FSO) is an advocacy group dedicated to actively working with state and federal agencies to maintain and broaden preservation efforts. We wish to inspire the public at large about the otters' unique behavior and habitat.

Our organization has been active on the central coast for over 3 decades and is a voice for our nearly 3,000 members nationwide who are passionate about saving sea otters.

During the fur trade of the 18th and 19th centuries, southern sea otters were hunted to near extinction. Today only about 2,500 otters can be found off California's central coast. Since January 1977, US Fish and Wildlife Service has placed sea otters on the Endangered Species list.

Friends of the Sea Otter supports MPAs

Sea otters are an indicator species for their environment, alerting us to problems in the ocean. These animals depend on healthy ocean waters to survive; currently the most frequent cause of sea otter death is disease. Otters contract diseases by eating contaminated shellfish. Sea otters need intact ecosystems to survive; and MPAs will help protect discreet, yet integrated ocean ecosystems. *We recommend that the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force include the entire sea otter range from Año Nuevo to Point Conception when determining the central coast pilot area.* This pilot area, suggested by the science team, will allow researchers to more effectively monitor sea otters in their habitat.

The most important issues for otters today center on healthy ecosystems. We urge you to support healthy ecosystems by supporting MPAs.

- ✓ Sea otters depend on healthy waters
- ✓ The #1 cause of sea otter deaths is disease
- ✓ MPA's will be a highly effective way to safeguard healthy otter habitat

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. We look forward to working with you as the MPA process continues.

Sincerely,

D'Anne Albers
Executive Director